

[illegible]

It is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for examination on the merits and early action and allowance thereof is accordingly respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS 4, 5, 8 AND 12-14

Please substitute the amended claims 4, 5, 8, and 12-14 for the original claims 4, 5, 8 and 12-14:

4. (Amended) A microgel as described in [any one of claims 1 through 3] claim 1, wherein the hydrophilic compound capable of forming a gel is one or more hydrophilic compounds selected from the group consisting of agar, carrageenan, curdlan, gelatin, gellan gum, and alginic acid.

5. (Amended) A microgel as described in [any one of claims 1 through 4] claim 1, which has a viscosity of 2,000-1,000,000 mPa.s (B-type viscometer, 25°C).

8. (Amended) An external composition comprising a microgel of [any one of claims 1 through 5] claim 1.

12. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 9 through 11] claim 9, wherein the amount of the pharmaceutical ingredient and/or the salt is 0.01-20 mass% of the total of the composition.

13. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 8 through 12] claim 8, which is a cosmetic composition.

14. (Amended) An external composition as described in [any one of claims 8 through 12] claim 8, which is a hair dye.